

# State of Connecticut

## General Assembly



March 10, 2022

Thank you Rep. Abercrombie and Sen. Moore, ranking members Sen. Berthel and Rep. Case and members of the committee for the opportunity to submit testimony regarding SB 284 -- An Act Increasing the Age from 8 to 18 years for an Income Eligible Person to Obtain Medical Assistance Regardless of Immigration Status.

One year ago, the legislature began work on this issue, which gave access to healthcare to children ages 0-8 who do not otherwise qualify for insurance. While this is a step in the right direction, our work on this matter is not finished. Access to healthcare is a fundamental human right. No one should be denied access to coverage because of immigration status or the inability to pay. This is an especially prevalent issue among low-income families as well as those with different immigration statuses. At a time where Covid-19 pandemic has led to increase health concerns in the nation, no parent should have to worry about how they are going to pay for care, should their child become sick.

In Connecticut, HUSKY coverage guarantees children the comprehensive health services they require including well-care checkups, dental care, immunizations, prescriptions, and health screening. Under the current standard, once a child covered under this program reaches the age of 9, they will no longer have access to these benefits. There are approximately 13,000 undocumented children in Connecticut living without health insurance who would benefit from this expansion. Expanding eligibility standards will help increase preventative care among minors before acute consequences arise. Additionally, studies show that regular access to care leads to improvements in educational settings. Children who are healthy will be able to attend school with less interruptions and are more likely to graduate from both high school and college. Health concerns do not stop once a child turns 9 years old. We must protect Connecticut children and give them the best chance to succeed.

Not only will the extension of this law benefit underrepresented communities, but it will also lessen the burden on hospitals and other healthcare facilities. Studies have shown that redefining the eligibility standards for health coverage will lead to a decrease in emergency department usage, as well as lessen the amount of money lost by hospitals due to uncompensated care. Currently, uninsured populations use emergency department for both emergent issues and to seek care that could be otherwise addressed in a primary care setting. Expanding eligibility will allow non-emergent issues to be treated in other healthcare settings, thus reducing the resources used by hospitals in emergency departments. In a time where the healthcare industry needs support, this is one way of helping decrease the financial burden caused by the ongoing pandemic.

By implementing this bill, Connecticut would be following the lead of states such as California, Illinois, New York, Oregon, and Washington, who passed bills extending healthcare coverage to include undocumented children. Connecticut has worked hard to create a healthcare system that works to insure its low-income population. SB 284 is the next step the General Assembly should take to promote health equality in the state.

Sincerely,

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JWG'.

Rep. Gilchrist  
18<sup>th</sup> District

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Sammy Rush Exum'.

Rep. Exum  
19<sup>th</sup> District

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Kate Farrar'.

Rep. Farrar  
19<sup>th</sup> District

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'M. Slap'.

Sen. Slap  
5<sup>th</sup> Senate District